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Music and Patent Medicine: Constructing and Performing Ideal Bodies in the American Medicine Show

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Music and Patent Medicine: Constructing and Performing Ideal Bodies in the American Medicine Show

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Report

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Abstract

Music and Patent Medicine: Constructing and Performing Ideal Bodies in the American Medicine Show

by

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From its peak in the 1890s through its gradual decline in the first half of the twentieth century, the American medicine show occupied a significant place in American medical, advertising, and entertainment culture. With close ties to vaudeville, circuses, and Wild West shows, the American medicine show packaged its advertising messages among various performative and participatory entertainment forms. This study examines the role played by music in these medicine shows, highlighting the ways in which musical repertories intersect with nostrum advertising by constructing and marketing ideal health and ideal bodies. In particular, this study draws on disability theory as articulated by Rosemarie Garland Thomson and echoed by a host of new, emerging scholarship in music and dis/ability.

While patent medicine companies of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century marketed their products through songbooks — pamphlets which integrated brief advertising messages with popular song texts — the dominant American medicine show of the mid-twentieth century shifted to marketing its products through recorded music. Though their media forms differ, the constructed ideal body of the early medicine show and mid-century medicine show remain consistent: young, male, and sexually potent. Similar insights into historically constructed ideal bodies comes from considering musical repertories produced in response to patent medicine consumption, in which individuals narrate their own experiences with socially charged health, illness, dis/ability, and embodiment.

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Music and the American Medicine Show

At the turn of the twentieth century, the American medicine show, a medium which "connected nineteenth-century medical technology, entertainment, and advertising,"[1] dominated popular consumer culture in both print and live advertising media. With origins in medieval Europe and American Colonial medical culture, traveling medicine shows served as the most prominent advertising platform for American patent medicines — combinations of oils, extracts, and quite often (mostly) alcohol marketed as cure-all remedies for a host of ills and ailments. Drawing from other itinerant performing traditions such as the circus and Wild West show, American medicine shows integrated product advertisements with magic shows, vaudeville staples, and various kinds of instrumental and vocal musical acts. Beyond attracting crowds of potential customers, the entertainment portions of medicine shows became advertising vehicles in and of themselves. Through the bodies of live performers on stage as well as narratives contained in popular song lyrics, medicine show companies bolstered their claims to ideal health and physical form.

In establishing a framework for analyzing the intersections between music and patent medicine, this study in part borrows the model of medical ethnomusicology as outlined in Geoffrey Barz's 2006 work, *Singing for Life: HIV/AIDS and Music in Uganda*. In the most theoretically dense portion of his work, Barz proposes a model for medical ethnomusicology, or more broadly, medical anthropology, which allows him to

[1] Ann Anderson, *Snake Oil, Hustlers, and Hambones: The American Medicine Show* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2000), 37.

explore the connections between Ugandan expressive culture and culturally conceived notions of health, illness, the body, and various medicines. As Barz himself acknowledges, his scholarly perspective grew out of the "crisis of representation" in anthropology and related disciplines in the 1980s, and medical ethnomusicology can be taken as one among many perspectives during a time of grand-theory deconstruction.

As Barz specifies, music in this particular cultural context is not only educational, but also medicine in and of itself:

> Music can be understood as a medical intervention when it both encourages medical analysis — "singing about HIV helps people learn about the need to go for testing" — and takes the form of medical treatment itself — "Music is taken as medicine. Even if one is in pain, they will get back some life if there is music. Even for the bereaved in those shrines, even in the prison, music is there. So, *music is medicine for teaching*."[2]

Though Barz's formulation of medical ethnomusicology adopts a view of music that fits specifically with understandings of music and medicine in late twentieth-century and early twenty-first-century Ugandan culture, his methodology and theoretical framework can be easily applied to other cultural and musical contexts. In studying other cultural moments when/where music and medicine interact, the medical ethnomusicologist ultimately must "[take] into account cultural understandings and interpretations of disease and illness, while focusing on the performative nature of treatment and healing" in order to arrive at "a much deeper understanding of how disease is made meaningful."[3]

More broadly, Barz's theoretical framework resonates with current practice in disability studies, a perspective taken in this study of music in the American medicine

[2] Gregory Barz. *Singing for Life: HIV/AIDS and Music in Uganda*. New York: Routledge, 2006: 59.
[3] Ibid., 62.

show. Just as Barz stresses cultural definitions of disease, scholars of disability studies understand disease (and its correlate, health) as a socio-politically charged site of identity construction. In her foundational text, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature*, Rosemarie Garland Thomson "[challenges] entrenched assumptions that "able-bodiedness" and its conceptual opposite, "disability," are self-evident physical conditions," and instead, that

> the "physically disabled" are produced by way of legal, medical, political, cultural, and literary narratives that comprise an exclusionary discourse. Constructed as the embodiment of corporeal insufficiency and deviance, the physically disabled body becomes a repository for social anxieties about such troubling concerns as vulnerability, control, and identity.[4]

Promises of health and wellbeing through patent medicine construct just such narratives, defining ideal bodies that exhibit certain physical characteristics with social, political, and cultural implications.

This study begins with an analysis of songbooks published by two particular turn-of-the-century medicine shows (Hamlin's Wizard Oil and Merchant's Gargling Oil), specifically addressing the ways in which song repertories and advertising claims within the pamphlets construct socially and culturally ideal bodies. Roughly fifty years after the publication of these songbooks, the Hadacol Caravan medicine show used similar advertising tactics with similar sociopolitical consequences for health and dis/abled bodies, but with the added benefit of mid-century communications technology. Following a discussion of music produced by Hadacol-affiliated performers and executives, the

[4] Rosemarie Garland Thomson, "Disability, Identity, and Representation: An Introduction," in *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 6, PDF.

report will shift perspective to examine music made by the consumers of patent medicine. Just as patent medicine companies used music as a powerful advertising tool to promise physiologically and culturally determined health, patent medicine consumers responded to and understood their own experience of health and dis/ability through music. The blues repertory surrounding Jamaica Ginger, a nostrum popular in the rural South during Prohibition, offers a means for considering the intersections between health, dis/ability, gender, and class identity.

· II ·

Hamlin's Wizard Oil, Merchant's Gargling Oil: Constructing Ideal Health Through Pocket Songbooks

While live entertainment served as the linchpin to the medicine show business model, printed materials provided additional means for advertising and developing consumer bases for patent medicines. Live performances were ephemeral, yet printed materials allowed patent medicine companies to exert their influence long after the caravan had moved on to the next town. The most prominent medicine show companies at the turn of the twentieth century attempted to introduce their products to potential consumers from multiple marketing angles. Companies such as the Kickapoo Indian Medicine Company integrated advertisements for their products with fantastic tales of Native American and Old West life.[5] Broadsides advertised vaudeville acts and theater troupes sponsored by nostrum companies, while still other advertisements for patent medicine entered consumers' homes in the form of (loosely constructed and often liberally fictionalized) historical texts, almanacs, medical handbooks, and even cookbooks.[6] Itinerant medicine troupes such the Hamlin's Wizard Oil caravan and the Merchant's Gargling Oil company often printed songbooks, "distributed at the shows so the audience could participate in sing-alongs,"[7] and conveniently available for free at any drugstore that sold the nostrum. In contrast to other forms of medicine show ephemera, these songbooks allowed nostrum companies to integrate their live performances with

[5] "Here Today, Here Tomorrow...Varieties of Medical Ephemera," NIH U.S. National Library of Medicine, last modified May 19, 1998, accessed July 26, 2015, http://www.nlm.nih.gov/exhibition/ephemera/medshow.html.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Anderson, *Snake Oil, Hustlers, and Hambones*, 114.

their print advertising campaigns. An examination of these songbooks thus provides one of the most fruitful means of analyzing the musical culture of the American medicine show.

These pamphlets, easily portable because of their small size, contained the texts to popular songs interspersed with product advertisements and customer testimonials. Of the songbooks examined in this study (Hamlin Wizard Oil [1899, ca. 1902, and ca. 1910], Merchant's Gargling Oil [1890]), none provide accompanying musical notation to the song texts, suggesting the musical aspect of the songs was relatively simple and/or already well-known. Rather than simply a collection of popular songs, the pamphlets contained song texts specifically used during the companies' live shows. The cover engraving of a Hamlin Company songbook published ca. 1910, for example, links the printed texts directly to the songs performed by the troupe during their "Open Air Advertising Concerts."[8] In the third volume of *An Annotated Catalogue of the Edward C. Atwater Collection of American Popular Medicine and Health Reform*, a description of the Hamlin Company spectacle asserts the songbooks' importance and estimates their circulation numbers. The passage, drawn from James Harvey Young's research into patent medicine and describing the specific roles played by the Hamlin musicians, salespeople, and printed advertising materials, deserves to be quoted at length:

> Part of Hamlin's success in selling *Hamlin's Wizard Oil* was due to his background as a magician and showman. Hamlin dispatched sales troupes that traveled the country, "each made up of a lecturer, a driver, and a male quartet. The group traveled in a special wagon, pulled by a four- or six-horse team, into which was built a parlor organ. The wagon, in the torch-lit evening, became a

[8] *Humorous and Sentimental Songs as Sung Throughout the United States by Hamlin's Wizard Oil Concert Troupes in their Open Air Advertising Concerts* (Chicago: Hamlin's Wizard Oil Company, c. 1910).

> stage, from which the quartet sang and played…One of Hamlin's stunts was the lavish distribution of pamphlets in which the words of such songs…were interspersed with promises as to how Wizard Oil could grapple with asthma and neuralgia. These song books were carried into thousands of homes. During a week or more that a troupe stayed in a town, the members were busy during the day as well as at night. While the lecturer sought to place supplies of Hamlin's liniment with local druggists, the quartet displayed their talents for church and charity groups."[9]

Cover illustrations of the songbooks additionally provide a visual record of the kinds of performing forces and circumstances expected from one of these outdoor patent medicine shows. The cover engraving of the ca. 1910 Hamlin songbook (image below), depicts a covered horse-drawn wagon, adorned with the Hamlin Company logo and an American flag, positioned just outside the gates of a city park. Inside the wagon, several musicians play (two wind players, two string payers, and a keyboardist), while a showman calls to the large crowd of men and women gathered in front of the wagon. On the rear seat of the wagon, a second salesman applies Hamlin's Wizard Oil to the bared arm of a male spectator.

[9] Christopher Hoolihan, ed., *An Annotated Catalogue of the Edward C. Atwater Collection of American Popular Medicine and Health Reform* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2008), 3: 318, Google Books.

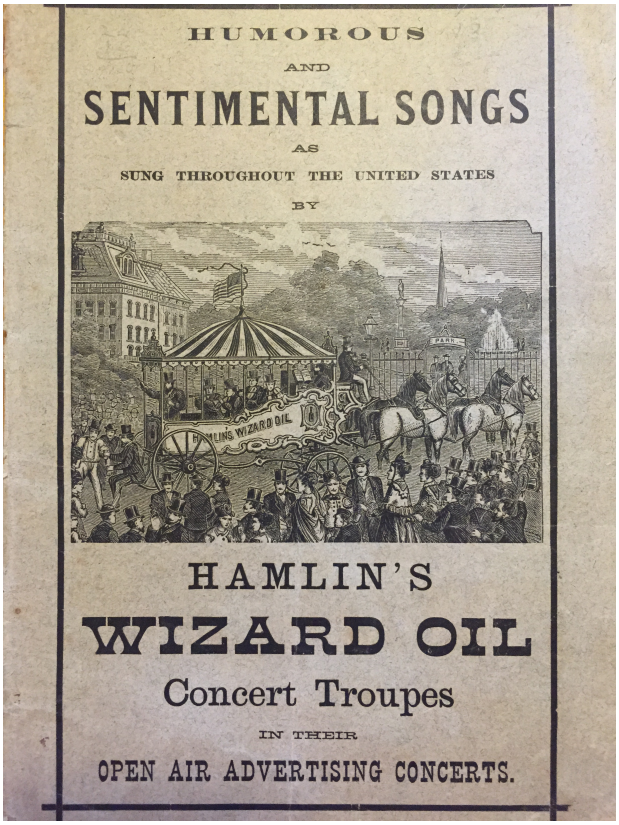

Figure 1. Humorous and Sentimental Songs as Sung Throughout the United States by Hamlin's Wizard Oil Concert Troupes in their Open Air Advertising Concerts. *[ca. 1910], 9 folio, 22.5 x 14.5 cm bound.*

Beyond their surface function as advertising pamphlets, the songbooks intersect significantly with the contemporaneous itinerant performance traditions and their corresponding ephemera. In particular, two Hamlin Company songbooks — one from 1899 and another from ca. 1902 — strongly recall circus imagery with their front cover lithographs depicting elephants. Shown drinking a bottle of Hamlin's Wizard Oil (presumably drawing his size and strength from the nostrum), and positioned next to a disproportionately small man for scale, the 1899 Hamlin songbook conjures images of Jumbo the elephant of recent P.T. Barnum fame. Jumbo himself often appeared in trade cards — "colorfully illustrated, engraved postcard[s] that carried the manufacturer's

name and address and pitched his particular brand of medicine."[10] In this small-form advertising medium, Jumbo's image is used as a means of demonstrating the quality of manufactured goods (i.e., the product in question holds up to even Jumbo's strength). A particularly violent instance of this message comes from a c. 1888 J.&P. Coats spool cotton trade card, which depicts a massive Jumbo in distress, restrained by several lengths of spool cotton.[11] In another Victorian-era spool cotton trade card, Jumbo is forcibly drawn through city streets by a team of horses and smaller elephants. Beneath the scene is inscribed the advertising message, "Jumbo must go, because drawn by Willimatic Thread!"[12] Given the wide circulation of Jumbo-related imagery and press in the decades leading up to the publication of the Hamlin songbooks, as well as medicine shows' shared heritage with circuses, carnivals, and other forms of traveling entertainment, the Hamlin Company likely capitalized on the cultural awe over Jumbo's physical prowess to promote their own products. Particularly through the 1899 illustration, in which the Jumbo-reminiscent elephant drinks from a bottle of Hamlin's Wizard Oil, Jumbo becomes an abstracted symbol of the ideal physical human form promised through the use of patent medicine.

[10] Anderson, *Snake Oil, Hustlers, and Hambones*, 41-42.
[11] "Victorian Advertising Card Jumbo the Elephant tied with J&P Coats Thread Circus," eBay, accessed August 10, 2015, http://www.ebay.com/itm/Victorian-Advertising-Card-Jumbo-the-Elephant-tied-with-J-P-Coats-Thread-Circus-/161787144054.
[12] "Jumbo the Elephant Willimatic Thread Victorian Trade Card," eBay, accessed August 10, 2015, http://www.ebay.com/itm/Jumbo-The-Elephant-Willimantic-Thread-Victorian-Trade-Card-/221842674375.

Figure 2. Hamlin's Wizard Oil Song Book*, 1899. 9 folio, 13 cm x 19 cm bound.*

Figure 3. Clark's O.N.T. Spool Cotton Trade Card featuring Jumbo the elephant arriving in London (left: verso, right: recto). 11.3 x 7.5 cm. Jumbo's physical strength and suggestions of his social prominence on the front of the card mimic the claims to O.N.T. Spool Cotton's strength and overall quality printed on the reverse.[13]

Along with the specific resonances with Jumbo's image, the Hamlin company drew on representations of elephants to evoke a general sense of exoticism (an exoticism that certainly played a role in the marketing of Jumbo, himself). The cover lithograph of the 1902 Hamlin songbook also features an elephant, this time carrying a haphazardly stacked pile of boxes containing Hamlin's Wizard Oil and marked as originating from "India." A man dressed in clothes that suggest an agricultural — or at least predominantly outdoor, hard-labor based — occupation drives the elephant. A similar

[13] Clark's Spool Cotton, *Jumbo's Arrival*, illus. Bueck and Lindler (New York: n.p., n.d.).

scene of foreign men and exotic animals accompanies advertising materials for Merchant's Gargling Oil. The back cover lithograph for an 1890 Merchant Oil songbook features the image of two men applying an unidentified tonic to the leg of a horse. Dressed in turbans, pointed-toe slippers, loose-fitting trousers, and fringed vests and sashes, the mustached men stand as exoticized representations of middle eastern culture, while the line-drawing tepees and horsemen in the background vaguely evoke constructions of Native American culture. An almost identical scene graces the cover of Merchant Gargling Oil's 1873 Almanac, an advertising pamphlet similar in nature to the songbooks.

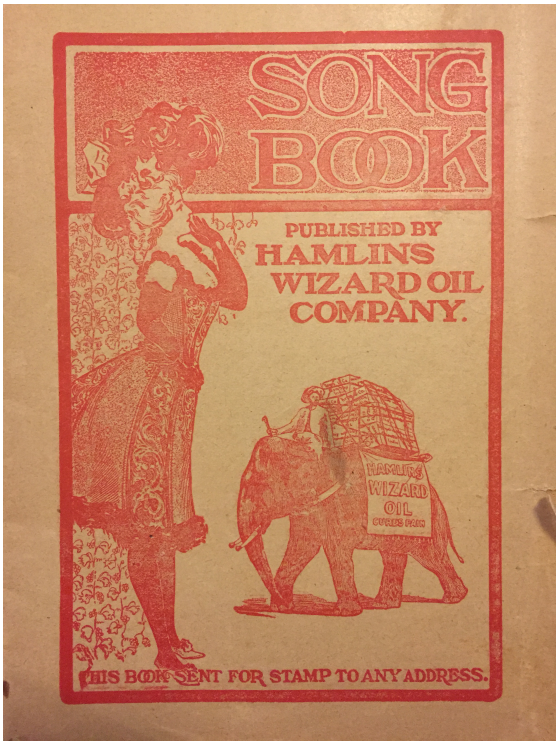

Figure 4. Left: Front cover illustration of Hamlins [sic] Wizard Oil Company Songbook *[ca. 1902]*[14] *Right: Back cover illustration of* Merchant's Gargling Oil Songster*, 1890.*[15]

In the broader scheme of patent medicine advertising, these images are indicative of the tendency for nostrum companies to make appeals to so-called "traditional" medicines. Aligning their products with an imagined version of a foreign culture — constructed as operating based on intuition rather than reason — these companies claimed the quasi-magical effects of their products. The prominence of this marketing scheme is perhaps best illustrated by the Kickapoo Indian Medicine Show, which built its entire brand around a construction of Native American health and healing practices. In the Kickapoo Indian Medicine Show marketing materials, Native American culture is presented as an Arcadian preserver of "natural" health, and by extension, Native

[14] *Song Book* (Chicago: Hamlin's Wizard Oil Company, c. 1902).
[15] *Merchant's Gargling Oil Songster, Dream Fate Calendar* (Merchant's Gargling Oil, 1890).

Americans as the possessors of ideal physical form. Broadsheet advertisements, such as the 1920 advertisement pictured below, as well as the "Kickapoo Doctor" imagery, served to confer authority on the company's products by virtue of its (imagined) source among (the supposed inherently wise, connected-to-nature) Native Americans.

Figure 5. Kickapoo Indian Medicine Company broadsheet advertisement, 1920 (right) and "Kickapoo Doctor" pamphlet cover illustration, 1890 (left).[16]

Beyond the cover illustrations of their songbooks, the Hamlin and Merchant companies continued to bombard the consumer with descriptions and promises of the ideal healthy body in the songbooks' texts. While the songbooks certainly contain a substantial number of song texts (the Hamlin Company's 1899 songbook contains the lyrics for 21 songs; the Hamlin ca. 1910, 52 texts; Hamlin 1902, 13 texts; Merchant's Gargling Oil 1890, 20 texts), the bulk of each songbook consists of testimonials from

[16] "Here Today, Here Tomorrow...Varieties," NIH U.S. National Library of Medicine.

satisfied customers, along with directions and suggestions for use. Typically, between one and three song texts appear on a page, with the facing page dedicated to testimonials and advertising. As a form of entertainment laced with advertisements, these songbooks performed the same marketing work that live performances would have, only with the added benefit of consumers being able to carry the advertisements with them. Long after the caravan had town, customers could retain a physical reminder of their need to purchase a potentially regular supply of Wizard Oil.

Not shy regarding the true intentions behind distributing the books, the company urges the consumer not to become too distracted by the song texts, lest they miss an opportunity to purchase another enticing nostrum among the Hamlin line of products. In an inscription beneath *My Little Polly's a "Peach"* in the 1899 Hamlin songbook, the voice of the company states: "Don't give all of your attention to the songs in this book. Look it through and see if there isn't something else that interests you. If singing makes you hoarse use Wizard Oil."[17] In fact, hoarseness from singing becomes somewhat of a theme in the advertising fragments scattered throughout the songbooks. Again in the 1899 songbook, the voice of the company suggests that the reader is in fact ill, and that left untreated, his ailments could prevent him from engaging in singing, presumably the very activity that caused the problem: "Better take something for that cough. After awhile you won't be able to sing at all. Hamlin's Cough Balsam is a good thing. Try it. For sale by druggists. 25 and 50 cents per bottle."[18] In yet another instance, the pamphlet resorts to insulting the consumer, writing "You don't sing as well as usual; you seem to be

[17] *Hamlin's Wizard Oil Songbook* (Chicago: Hamlin's Wizard Oil Company, 1899), np.
[18] Ibid.

hoarse. If your throat is sore use Hamlin's Wizard Oil."[19] Taken together, these three directives reflect a circular business model in which need for the product is continuously reinvigorated by participation in the product's advertising culture (i.e., consumers need Wizard Oil because they have sung themselves hoarse from singing Wizard Oil songs).

Directives for health maintenance are not, however, restricted to the extra-musical commentary — based on the content of the Hamlin 1899 songbook, patent medicine companies used the song texts themselves to promote the use of various tonics, salves, and oils as cures for common ailments. The song, "They Ought to Take Something for That," printed in the 1899 songbook, explicitly describes situations in which the use of an unnamed medicine would ensure speedy recoveries. The song, with text and music by Joe Newman, comprises two verses with two slightly varying choruses:

In a drug store I sat and was thinking one day,
If a lotion, a balm or a salve,
Were but needed to cure all the ills of the mind,
What a picnic the druggists would have!
A short time ago I caught a very slight cold,
Friends gathered from near and far off;
And each one shook his head, as he anxiously said,
When he heard me beginning to cough.

Chorus — You ought to take something for that,
Yes, you ought to take something for that,
For if that gets any worse, you perhaps will need a hearse,
So you ought to take something for that.

Many young men nowadays have developed quite a fad,
To imitate the English is their aim;
They wear the oddest clothes and affect the strangest airs,
And from the other side you'd think they came,
A young man walks along, in his hand he has a cane,
An eye-glass adjusted just so,

[19] Ibid.

With a blank look in his face, he will gaze out into space
And say "Ah, there! by jove, don't you know."

Chorus — He ought to take something for that,
Yes, he ought to take something for that,
If a tail he had, you see, a dude monkey he would be,
So he ought to take something for that.[20]

Printed in a publication dedicated to the promotion of Hamlin's Wizard Oil, the unnamed medicine is clearly implied to be one (or more) of that company's line of products. If any doubt remained in the reader/singer/consumer as to the identity of the medicine, however, commentary below the song text erases the possibility of other medicines doing the trick. Referring specifically to the song narrative printed above, the pamphlet reads, "Hamlin's Cough Balsam would cure the cough and Hamlin's Wizard Oil would do the rest."[21]

In reconstructing a possible performance scenario for this text within the context of a medicine show, one might imagine the stage performer singing the verses, while the audience joins in with the relatively simple and repetitive chorus.[22] In particular, the repeated lines of you/he "ought to take something for that" function as a catchy advertising jingle, a musical fragment which might come to mind when the consumer is faced with the question of if and how to manage his or her own health problems.

Though less explicitly linked to the curative powers of patent medicines, an additional text in the songbook highlights physical rejuvenation on a miraculous scale. The song, "Mike M'Carthy's Wake," by Safford Waters, depicts a scene of drunken men

[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Though the songbooks include only text and no music, the repetitive lyrics and simple rhyme schemes suggest a similarly simple musical accompaniment.

celebrating the life of their recently departed friend, when suddenly an unexpected occurrence shocks them all from their revelry:

> When the fun was at its height, McCarthy sat up straight,
> Sure, it was a fearful sight, and the effect was great,
> Holy Moses, he nearly scared us all to death.
> I leaned against the wall, and when again I got my breath,
> He wasn't dead at all.

Chorus —

> So we all went up and grabbed him by the hand,
> Just as if he'd come back from a foreign land,
> And McCarthy he began to shout and dance,
> And said by chance he had a trance,
> And if we'd a hurried him we might a buried him,
> Then we had a real old Irish reel,
> And McCarthy like himself began to feel,
> And I won't forget the whiskey was so wet that night
> At Mike McCarthy's wake.[23]

As with the other texts in the songbook, the text for "Mike M'Carthy's Wake" is followed by a brief statement attesting to the efficacy Hamlin's Blood and Liver Pills. The pairing of Mike McCarthy's revival with a Hamlin advertisement subtly links the events of the song narrative to the effects of the nostrum.

Apart from its use of explicitly health-related themes in song texts, the Hamlin Company additionally made use of certain constructed identity categories through their song collections in order to market certain kinds of socially defined ideal bodies. In so doing, the company not only constructed the ideal body, but promised its attainment through use of its products. While much of the songbooks' imagery constructs ideal health through exoticism, white masculinity plays a significant role in ideal health as constructed through the song texts. In particular, turn-of-the-century American

[23] *Hamlin's Wizard Oil Songbook*, np.

masculinity, expressed musically through barbershop singing, factored into the Hamlin Company's promises for ideal health through Wizard Oil consumption.

In his own research on barbershop and Victorian-era masculinity, Richard Mook describes barbershop quartet singing as a constructed space in which white men could perform certain coded behaviors in efforts to display their masculinity and virility. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, barbershop singing belonged to a category of masculine-marked public activities that included strenuous physical "contests and relationships with other men," in which, Mook argues, "the "character" that "self-made" men acquired in overpowering other men marked their true manhood."[24] Although the activity of singing seems to lack the brute physicality involved in other kinds of male-dominated activities (contact sports, physical labor, etc.), barbershop and the wider vaudeville tradition were in fact closely tied to these activities in the United States during the late nineteenth century. Americans in the early twentieth century, already engaged in the nostalgic revival of Victorian sensibility, increasingly associated barbershop with physicality — a trend that began in the nineteenth century. Public spaces designated for masculine physical activities sometimes doubled as music-making venues. As Mook chronicles in his research, "Keith's Vaudeville Theatre in Philadelphia played a host to at least twenty-six professional touring quartets and a national quartet contest between 1900 and 1925; its top floor was also home to a gymnasium that specialized men's physical

[24] Richard Mook, "White Masculinity in Barbershop Quartet Singing," *Journal of the Society for American Music* 1, no. 4 (November 2007): 456-457, accessed August 9, 2015, DOI:10.1017/S1752196307070423.

fitness."[25] By 1925, barbershop revivalist Sigmund Spaeth had described the barbershop tradition as a kind of "sporting contest or manly competition."[26]

While performing texts that "emphasized camaraderie and closeness," barbershop singers "encouraged emotional and physical closeness between singers in ways that reflect the ideals of neo-Victorian masculinity."[27] The mechanics of barbershop singing, in comparison to other forms of music making, enabled "physical modes of engagement between singers that their arrangements demanded."[28] These four-part vocal arrangements "encoded closeness by eliminating those musical practices, such as instrumental accompaniment and solo verses, that had previously allowed singers to separate physically."[29] The physical closeness of the musicians during performance of barbershop repertory was further echoed by the voicing of barbershop tunes, their close harmony structure mimicking and aurally reinforcing the physical position of the performers.

Given its broad narrative of constructed ideal masculinity, barbershop singing stood poised to market physical health as promised by patent medicines in public spaces such as the traveling medicine show. As the above-quoted passage from the *Edward C. Atwater Collection* indicates, barbershop quartets, or simply, "male quartet[s],"[30] were a regular feature of Hamlin performing troupes. Based on Young's assertion that the male quartet made daytime appearances in town in addition to the regular evening

[25] Ibid., 458.
[26] Ibid., 461.
[27] Ibid., 460.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Hoolihan, *An Annotated Catalogue of the Edward*, 3: 318.

entertainment program, it would appear that the barbershop quartet occupied a particularly important social role among the ranks of the caravan.

Reflective of their live performative counterpart, the Hamlin songbooks show a great dependency upon the barbershop tradition, with many songs featuring typical barbershop narratives, including general nostalgia, a reference to "a mythic geography of male domains from…small town life," "old courtships, … female archetypes, and idealized relationships."[31] (With their close affiliation to vaudeville and minstrelsy, it comes as little surprise that medicine shows likewise drew from shared musical styles and traditions, including barbershop.) Among the Hamlin barbershop repertory (as reflected in the songbooks), romantic feelings for women expressed from afar constitute a popular subject. Of the twenty-one songs in the 1899 songbook, six assume a male narrative voice which sings of some type of feminine virtue or male-female romantic relationship (texts sampled below):

"Bonnie Sweet Bessie, the Maid O'Dundee"

A highland laddie there lived o'er the way,
A laddie both noble and gallant and gay.
Who loved a lassie as noble as he.
A bonnie sweet lassie, the maid o'Dundee;
This lassie had lands, but the laddie had nane,
And yet to her it was all the same,
For dearly she loved him, and said she knew
This laddie, dear laddie, was gude and true.[32]

"She Always Dressed in Black" | Words by Walter H. Ford, Music by John H. Bratton

Chorus — She could look so innocent and cute,

[31] Gage Averill, "Bell Tones and Ringing Chords: Sense and Sensation in Barbershop Harmony," *The World of Music: Hearing and Listening in Cultural Contexts* 41, no. 1 (1999): 42, accessed August 9, 2015, http://www.jstor.org/stable/41700111.
[32] *Hamlin's Wizard Oil Songbook*, np.

She had charms that no one could dispute,
But the color of her dress kept the chappies on the guess,
So she always dressed in black.[33]

"My Little Polly's a "Peach.""

Chorus — She's the girl I dream about, I think the world of Polly!
She's the girl I never doubt, She'd nota case of "jolly,"
If you saw her, in your heart a tender spot she'd reach,
Sweet as the rest of them, good as the best of them, "Polly's a peach!"[34]

"Isabelle! (A Girl Who Is One of the Boys.)" | Words by Walter H. Ford, Music by John H. Bratton

Songs are sung in every tongue, all about clever girls, old and young,
Some are fair, well that's not rare; beautiful, certainly, all declare,
But there's one, who's in for fun, ready wit, full of it, takes the bun,
Cash to sell, she cuts a swell. Beautiful Isabelle.
The boys all go in raptures when they see her smile,
The girls all dote upon her and they imitate her style.
Her sister Henrietta won a great renown,
But Isabelle captured all the town.[35]

"Mrs. Clancy's Daughter" | Words and music by Edgar Selden

Chorus — Misses Clancy's daughter is so young and fair;
Little Maggie Clancy with her auburn hair;
Other girls may envy, but they can't compare
With the winning ways of Misses Clancy's daughter.[36]

"She's the Daughter of Officer Porter" | Music by Geo. Scheleiffarth

She is the daughter of Officer Porter, is charming Kitty,
Laughing and merry, with lips like a cherry, so gay and witty;
She's known, of course, as the pride of the force, and the boy's delight!
She is the daughter of officer Porter, and she's all right![37]

Still other songs in the collections, voiced from a male perspective, focus on close bonds between men. These intimate relationships as expressed through the barbershop repertory

[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.

in turn reinforce the physicality of male-coded spaces. In Mook's words, the spaces of "rough, carefree young men, whose ties to the others in the gang could only be broken by marriage and domestication" construct imagined rural spaces dominated by men and largely absent of women.[38] Songs narrated from a white male perspective (linguistically distinct from those songs in the pamphlets marked as African American) emphasize youthful vitality, physical labor, and communal activity in undeveloped, natural spaces. In the ca. 1910 Hamlin songbook, the song, "Come Brothers Arouse" epitomizes this brand of masculinity:

> Come brothers arouse, let the owl go to rest, Oh! the summer sun's in the sky,
> The bee's on the wing, and the hawk's in his nest, and the river runs merrily by, and the river runs merrily by.
> Our mother the world, a good mother is she, says, to toil is to welcome her fare,
> Some bounty she hang us, on every tree, and blesses us in the sweet air.
>
> CHORUS:— Come dance lads, come dance lads, Oh ho! Oh ho! Oh ho!
> Come dance lads, come dance lads, come dance, come dance, away, away,
> Oh ho!
>
> And this is the life for a man, a man, and this is the life for me.
> The prince, he may boast, if he can, he can, but he never was half so free, but he never was half so free.
> Our mother the world, etc.
>
> CHORUS:— Come dance lads, etc.

As the men in the song free themselves from social convention, communing with the natural world around them, they affirm their masculinity, living "the life for a man…the life for me." Appearing on the same page as "Come Brothers Arouse," an additional song, "There's Nothing Like a Fresh'ning Breeze" continues these themes of men's

[38] Mook, "White Masculinity in Barbershop," 458.

mastery over natural forces. The text further engages with working class identity in its romanticizing of life at sea:

> Give me a fresh'ning breeze, my boys, a white and swelling sail,
> A ship that cuts the dashing waves, and weathers every gale,
> What life is like a seaman's life, so free, so bold, so brave?
> His home the ocean's wide expanse, a coral bed his grave.
> Hurrah, then for a seaman's life, for ocean, ship and wind,
> There's nothing like a fresh'ning breeze, to gladden heart and mind.
>
> When foaming waves around us dash, the angry storm loud roars,
> 'Tis music to the sailor's ears, and high his courage soars,
> He feels a king of mighty power, the elements his slaves,
> His trusty ship at his command, steers on through storm and waves,
> Hurrah, then for a seaman's life, for ocean, ship and wind,
> There's nothing like a fresh'ning breeze, to gladden heart and mind.
> Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah![39]

Contemporaneous with Theodore Roosevelt's mastering of the American landscape at the turn of the century, these songs integrate constructions of American and working class identity within their construct of masculinity. As a whole, the sentiments expressed in these texts echo the text of "They Ought to Take Something for That" (transcribed above), particularly its second stanza, in which the narrative voice mocks the social pretensions and affected airs of the European dandy. In fact, the songs paint a larger narrative of class conflict, which plays out both on the level of American versus European and working class versus socioeconomic elite. Perhaps the most overt expression of working class solidarity comes near the end of the 1890 Merchant's Gargling Oil Songster, with a song titled "They Can't Keep the Workingman Down." After a brief introduction, the song's narrator laments the social forces that prey on

[39] *Humorous and Sentimental Songs*, np.

working class individuals, but eventually asserts the critical role that working-class men have in building societal foundations:

> Chorus.— Then hold up your head and the world never dread,
> Don't care for its sneer or its frown, —
> Stare fate in the face, if your heart's in its place,
> They can't keep the workingman down.
>
> The man who is working his wages will spend
> With his comrades so happy and gay;
> And scarcely before the week comes to an end,
> His wages have all passed away.
> But if he would lay by a dollar or two
> And place it in some bank in town,
> He would then wink his eye, tell his boss on the sly,
> That he can't keep the workingman down!
>
> We'll just take this house as it stands here to-night
> And compare it,— for that is my plan;
> The roof's Aristocracy, so are the walls,—
> The foundation the hard workingman!
> We take off the roof and the walls still remain,—
> Take the walls,—the foundation is sound;
> But you take the foundation the workingman made,
> And the structure then falls to the ground.[40]

Never-minding the fact that Merchant's Gargling Oil might be one of those items that workingmen squander their wages on, the song included here overtly fosters a sense of working-class solidarity by encouraging men to engage in the supposedly subversive act of investing.

The emphasis on male experience in the song choices echoes the apparent target demographic reflected in the extra-musical content of the pamphlets. Though the cover illustration of the ca. 1910 Hamlin songbook clearly depicts women attending the public, outdoor medicine show, the testimonials offered within the Hamlin songbooks come

[40] *Merchant's Gargling Oil Songster,* 26.

overwhelmingly from men. Of the sixty-three testimonials in the 1899 songbook, only three come from women customers. Six additional testimonials address women's ailments. Five of these, however, are written by husbands, describing the ailments of their wives, with the last coming from a father attesting to the success his daughter experienced when treating her "contracted cords" with Hamlin's Wizard Oil.[41] The ca. 1910 songbook shows a similar trend, with only two of twenty-eight testimonies coming from women. In these cases, though, the women write in to describe how Hamlin Wizard Oil has benefitted their male acquaintances: Mrs. M.A. Steward of Paola, Kansas writes of how a male "friend and neighbor" used Wizard Oil for rheumatism, and Asa Flyer of Syracuse, NY praises Wizard Oil for the cure it offered Mr. John W. Philips, "a guest of [her] hotel."[42] In this pamphlet, the only mention of women's bodies comes from a testimonial offered by S.C. Burrell of Dennison, Texas, who dryly mentions his wife at the end of his own narrative:

> Wizard Oil cured me of a very severe case of Lame Back, caused from Inflammation of the Kidneys. Have suffered for years. I could not straighten up, and at times could not turn in bed. I feel better than I have for thirty years. My wife has also been benefitted by its use.[43]

The general avoidance of women's bodies is characteristic throughout the songbooks. In only two instances does the Hamlin Company suggest a use for Hamlin's Wizard Oil specific to women. On the final page of the ca. 1910 songbook, at the bottom of the page, the company claims that Wizard Oil serves as a remedy for sore nipples after nursing children. The final page of the 1902 Hamlin songbook shows how women's

[41] *Hamlin's Wizard Oil Songbook,* np.
[42] *Humorous and Sentimental Songs*, np.
[43] Ibid.

health was constructed as distinct from their male counterparts', requiring its own line of products that did not intersect with the mainstream of male health narrative:

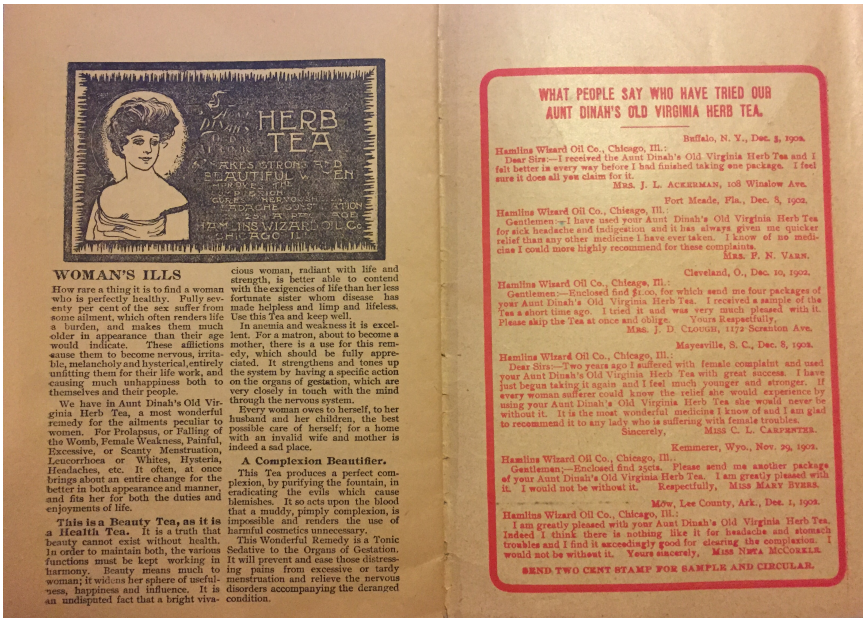

Figure 6. Advertisement and testimonials for Aunt Dinah's Old Virginia Herb Tea, final page of ca. 1902 Hamlin Songbook.

Tucked away at the back of the pamphlet, women's bodies become exceptions to the rule of ideal male form.

The combination of these testimonials and health directives with the overabundance of male-dominated barbershop repertory results in the construction of an ideal body distinctly marked as male. Male bodies are held up as the health standard which can be achieved through use of Hamlin's Wizard Oil or Merchant's Gargling Oil. While women appear in the songbooks, the largely do so as abstractions, as the objects of affection in male-voiced barbershop narratives. Men, on the other hand, appear as active beings who move freely among social and natural spaces — whether it be the open seas

or the local drugstore — and who assert their social identity through displays of sheer physicality.

· III ·

Hadacol: Medicine Shows and New Media

Soon after the generation of Hamlin's Wizard Oil and Merchant's Gargling Oil, the American medicine show experienced a sharp decline. The passing of the Pure Food and Drug Act in 1906 and the creation of the Food and Drug Administration significantly limited the claims patent medicine manufacturers could make regarding their products, and likewise restricted the ingredients that could be included in tonic formulas. Along with patent medicines themselves, the medicine show format began to fade from the cultural landscape. One final shining moment for the American medicine show, however, came in the late 1940s from the unlikely figure of Dudley J. LeBlanc, a Louisiana state senator who additionally developed and marketed patent medicines. During its relatively brief existence, LeBlanc's most successful product, Hadacol, entered the American cultural consciousness through all available forms of advertising media, taking the turn-of-the-century medicine show and expanding its reach while preserving its fundamental ethos.

The live entertainment portion of Hadacol's advertising program came about as LeBlanc searched for "a way to both advertise and offset a tax bill that at one point amounted to over $300,000."[44] By developing a live show, LeBlanc could create massive demand for Hadacol throughout the country, all while writing off the production and travel costs as business expenses. The performative form of the Hadacol Caravan, which first toured in 1950, largely resembles the medicine shows that came in the decades

[44] Anderson, *Snake Oil, Hustlers, and Hambones*, 152.

before it: shows featured a combination of comedy, circus performers, vaudeville acts, and music, which strategically framed advertisements for the patent medicine. Featuring stars who first found success in vaudeville before appearing in new media, such as radio and television, the show continued the pattern of intersection between medicine shows and vaudeville acts established in the nineteenth-century. Compared to the modest performing forces exemplified by the single-unit Hamlin's Wizard Oil wagons, however, LeBlanc's show took on unparalleled proportions, featuring a host of Hollywood celebrities and popular musicians, including Bob Hope, Jimmy Durante, Carmen Miranda, and Hank Williams. As Ann Anderson chronicles in her research, the Hadacol Caravan "had seventy trucks, twenty-five cars, two air-conditioned buses for the talent, a photolab truck, two beauty-queen floats, three sound trucks, three airplanes, two calliopes, and sometimes a train called the Hadacol Special."[45] Fully utilizing the available technology to reach every potential market, LeBlanc additionally "filmed the shows for the towns not fortunate enough to be on the route."[46]

Just as with the medicine shows of the early century, the appearance of the Hadacol Caravan provided a significant diversion for the Southern and Midwestern communities included on the tour. Analogous to the Hamlin quartet performing at various locations around town, the Hadacol Caravan interacted with the wider community at each tour stop. Moving quickly from location to location — making "one-night stands in eighteen cities"[47] along the original 1950 route — the Caravan saturated the town with

[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid., 153.

entertainment and advertisements throughout the day leading up to the evening show proper. Again, as Ann Anderson describes:

> A typical Hadacol Caravan day started with a parade with floats and sound trucks. Most of the Hadacol executives were on board. At LeBlanc's insistence, they had left the operation of the business to a skeleton crew. The show preliminaries started about 7:30 P.M. in a large stadium where clowns and acrobats ran through the bleachers to entertain the crowd while the seats filled. One clown, dressed like a policeman, drank from a giant bottle of Hadacol. Every drink made his special glasses light up…At 8 P.M., LeBlanc rolled into the stadium in his big white Cadillac. He'd say a few words and then retire to his box for the rest of the show. George Burns and Bob Hope were alternating masters of ceremonies. The Tony Martin band started things with some Gershwin tunes, then the Chez Paree Chorus Line displayed bathing attire of yesteryear. The women were general greeted with shouts of "Yahoo, Hadacol!" Another band would play, perhaps Sharkey Bonano and His Dixieland Band, followed by comedy routines that featured Hadacol jokes.[48]

Audience members gained admission to the show by presenting two Hadacol box tops — only one for children[49] — thus ensuring a steady market for Hadacol in the days and weeks leading up to the caravan's appearance. In towns where Hadacol was not yet sold, advertisements for the show (and its requisite two-box-top admission price) left druggists and grocers willing to pay high prices to stock the tonic for demanding customers.[50] With this admissions policy, LeBlanc cultivated a sense of exclusivity surrounding attendance to the show, an exclusivity mirrored in the Caravan print advertisements that claim "Money can't buy admission to this star-studded show!"

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[48] Ibid.
[49] Despite Hadacol's 12% alcohol content, LeBlanc spent a considerable amount of effort advertising specifically to children.
[50] Anderson, *Snake Oil, Hustlers, and Hambones*, 152.

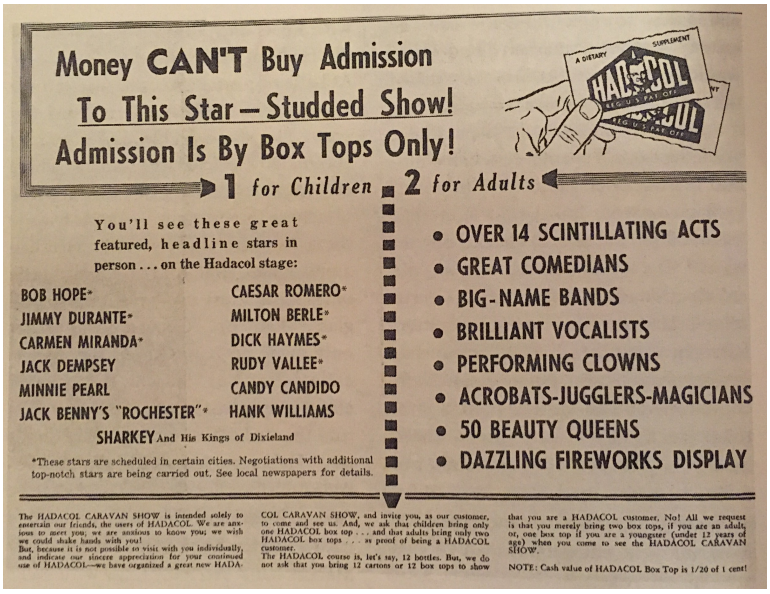

Figure 7. Hadacol Caravan print advertisement, as reproduced in Snake Oil, Hustlers, and Hambones *(Anderson)*[51]

As a result of the 1950 tour, the Hadacol Caravan had garnered so much cultural capital that allegedly, "LeBlanc was deluged with requests from performers to join his second show."[52] This second tour, conducted in the late summer of 1951, delivered on expectations for its success, drawing audiences of as many as "ten to thirty thousand" at each performance.[53]

The enormous success of Hadacol's live entertainment was only matched by its significant presence in print and recorded media. While regulatory agencies like the FDA and American Medical Association significantly curbed patent medicine advertising activity in the 1940s and 1950s, new technologies allowed the patent medicine companies that remained to extend their advertising reach. For LeBlanc, radio proved a critical

[51] Ibid., 154.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid., 153.

advertising medium for promoting Hadacol throughout the country. Radio broadcasts provided the same kinds of entertainment as featured in the live caravan performances, in many ways mimicking the relationship between turn-of-the-century medicine shows and their songbooks for at-home use. The communications publication *Broadcasting, Telecasting* reports on the extent of LeBlanc's radio advertising plans in its January 1, 1951 issue:

> **HADACOL SHOW: First Nationwide Radio Use**
>
> First venture in network broadcasting will be launched Jan. 12 by the LeBlanc Corp. (Hadacol, a dietary supplement), according to plans by its president, State Senator Dudley J. LeBlanc. Cost of time and talent for the nationwide half-hour show, which will be aired over MBS, ABC and Liberty networks and some 150 independent outlets, is expected to total $50,000.
>
> The broadcast, featuring such stars as Judy Garland, Groucho Marx, Vic Damone and Minnie Pearl, will coincide with Hadacol's entry into Los Angeles and West Coast markets, according to the firm. At present, LeBlanc is placing 12 spots daily on 16 stations in the Los Angeles area along with newspaper advertising.[54]

Though the *Broadcasting, Telecasting* article sets LeBlanc's radio advertising costs at $50,000, Anderson estimates that LeBlanc spent up to "a million dollars a month" on advertising in various mediums by 1950.[55]

Though primarily consumed virtually through radio, these shows provided live entertainment for a select few who were able to secure seats in the recording theater. As the *Broadcasting, Telecasting* article continues, LeBlanc staged Hadacol-sponsored Christmas parties in cooperation with local radio stations. At one such party hosted by WNOE in New Orleans, for example, "700 children and 150 parents jammed a

[54] "HADACOL SHOW," *Broadcasting, Telecasting*, January 1, 1951, 44, accessed August 9, 2015, http://ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1285677730?accountid=7118.
[55] Anderson, *Snake Oil, Hustlers, and Hambones*, 151.

downtown theater for gifts and a three hour show," the demand for seats so great that "children lined up as far as two city blocks were denied entrance when the theater filled to capacity."[56]

Intersecting with Hadacol's radio presence, several hillbilly records boosted Hadacol's media popularity during the height of the patent medicine's success. Within the context of American medicine show ephemera, these records — which Hadacol customers could consume at home and in their social lives — worked much like the songbook pamphlets used by previous generations of medicine shows. This move away from songbooks toward pre-recorded music mirrors the wider shift from amateur music participation to consumption. While distributing songbooks for audiences to sing along with traveling performers may have made sense for the generation of Hamlin's Wizard Oil and Merchant's Gargling Oil, LeBlanc increased his chances of reaching new market bases mid-century by filling jukeboxes and radio spots with catchy songs performed by well-known musicians.

Without the extra-musical testimonials and advertisements made possible by the songbook medium, Hadacol records contain a higher density of tonic promotion in the song lyrics themselves. Of course, the coupling of these songs with radio and television advertisements allowed for additional advertising apart from the messages contained in the songs (by 1950, "more than 500 radio and television stations ran a million spots per year"[57]), however, the nature of the songs allowed them to stand alone as Hadacol — and Hadacol only — advertisements. In contrast to the vaguely health-related songs marketed

[56] "HADACOL SHOW," 44.
[57] Anderson, *Snake Oil, Hustlers, and Hambones*, 151.

through the Hamlin and Merchant songbooks, for example, Hadacol popular tunes all refer to the tonic specifically in their titles, and accordingly repeat the name of the product multiple times over the course of the song. As in the turn-of-the-century songbooks, these Hadacol recordings construct images of ideal bodies that could supposedly be attained by consuming the nostrum. Perhaps the most prominent among these Hadacol songs, the "Hadacol Boogie," recorded by Bill Nettles and His Dixie Blue Boys and released on Mercury Records in 1949, features a rather straightforward association between able-bodiedness and dance. The song opens with a nod to LeBlanc's Southern heritage, a reference which further represents Hadacol's target Southern demographic:

> Down in Lou'siana where the bright sun shine,
> They do a little boogie-woogie all the time.
> They do the Hadacol boogie,
> (Hadacol boogie!)
> The Hadacol boogie,
> (Hadacol boogie!)
> The Hadacol boogie makes you boogie-woogie all the time.

In a relatively transparent manner, the song suggests that consumption of Hadacol will result in increased, sustained energy and vitality (with a certain degree of — largely male — sexual-potency subtext), thus "The Hadacol boogie makes you boogie-woogie all the time."[58]

Although the recorded medium facilitates consumption over participation, the simple stanzaic structure of the song does not preclude listener participation, likely increasing the degree to which the active listener absorbed the advertising message. In

[58] "Bill Nettles -- Hadacol Boogie," video file, 2:51, YouTube, posted by MrJohnnyNumbers, January 19, 2012, accessed August 9, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r4AGJAz5bf0.

fact, with the call-and-response between Nettles and his band members, the structure of the music models and even encourages listener participation.

Compared to the Hamlin and Merchant songbooks that almost exclusively feature male bodies (in both song texts and extra-musical advertisements), the "Hadacol Boogie" suggests women's consumption of Hadacol and subsequent enjoyment of able-bodiedness. The second and third stanzas, while still told from the male perspective, focus on two women subjects:

> A'standin' on the corner with my bottle in my hand,
> And up stepped a mama, said "my Hadacol man!"
> She done the Hadacol boogie,
> (Hadacol boogie!)
> The Hadacol boogie,
> (Hadacol boogie!)
> The Hadacol boogie makes you boogie-woogie all the time.
>
> I gone down to the farm to rest about a week,
> But the farmer's wife, she got to walkin' in her sleep.
> She done the Hadacol boogie,
> (Hadacol boogie!)
> The Hadacol boogie,
> (Hadacol boogie!)
> The Hadacol boogie makes you boogie-woogie all the time.

The following stanza, although not addressing women directly, discusses car parts as gendered-female:

> If your radiator leaks and your motor stands still,
> A-give her Hadacol and watch 'er boogie up the hill.
> She'll do the Hadacol boogie,
> (Hadacol boogie!)
> The Hadacol boogie,
> (Hadacol boogie!)
> The Hadacol boogie makes you boogie-woogie all the time.[59]

[59] "Bill Nettles -- Hadacol," video file.

The suggestion that Hadacol could be used as motor oil may seem outlandish, but the claims do run consistent with a larger trend of suggesting non-human uses for patent medicine. The 1899 Hamlin songbook, for example, suggests that Hamlin's Wizard Oil be used on corn crops to ensure higher crop yield of a greater quality.[60] The trajectory of the "Hadacol Boogie," then, takes the listener through increasingly abstracted uses of the tonic, from distinctly human to non-human, with the final two stanzas describing the effects on somewhat anthropomorphized chickens.

Another record, "What Put the Pep in Grandma," performed by Audrey Williams (wife of Hadacol Caravan regular Hank Williams), additionally engages with gender and able-bodiedness, but carries with it more social implications than those touched on in the "Hadacol Boogie." Released as a 78rpm on Decca Records in 1950, the track features Audrey Williams on lead vocals with a chorus chiming in on the cries of "Hadacol!" that conclude each stanza. Though the song certainly takes a woman as its primary model for an ideal body, it does so through farce, drawing its humor through the narrative of an elderly woman behaving in socially unexpected, if not fully unacceptable, ways. The recurring stanza describing "grandma's" new choice of dress and evening amusements, in particular, humorously suggests impropriety:

> What put the pep in grandma,
> And made her hit the ball?
> She bought a fascinator,
> And threw away her shawl.
> She goes down to the ol' barndance
> And does the crawdad crawl.
> What put the pep in grandma?

[60] *Hamlin's Wizard Oil Songbook*, np.

Hady-col! Hady-col! Hady-col! Hady-col![61]

Throughout the song narrative, "grandma's" surprising able-bodiedness is repeatedly contrasted with the physical weakness of "grandpa," who laments his wife's behavior and its effects on his own physical health.

Grandma's over eighty,
She feels like sweet sixteen.
She's a-cuttin' [rusties]
That grandpa's never seen
Grandpa's short and droopy
Grandma's straight and tall.
What put the pep in grandma?
Hady-col! Hady-col! Hady-col! Hady-col!

[…]

Grandpa's getting' worried,
Cause grandma's on the prowl.
She won't stay at home,
Cause ev'ry night's her night to pow.
Grandma wants to giggle,
And grandpa wants to bawl.
What put the pep in grandma?
Hady-col! Hady-col! Hady-col! Hady-col!

Grandma grabbed ol' pappy,
And said let's jitterbug.
He threw away his walking cane
And tried to cut a rug.
Now there lays ol' grandpappy,
All stretched out in the hall.
What put the pep in grandma?
Hady-col! Hady-col! Hady-col! Hady-col![62]

[61] "What Put the Pep in Grandma -- Audrey Williams with Hank Williams & The Drifting Cowboys," video file, 2:36, YouTube, posted by Eric Cajundelyon, August 2, 2014, accessed August 9, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dBvd3L6fjSM.
[62] Ibid.

The idea that “grandma’s” new physical abilities cause “grandpa” emotional and even actual physical harm not only play into the slapstick-style humor of the song, but suggest more serious male anxieties related to socially constructed norms for women’s bodies and behavior. In the narrative, “grandma” overpowers “grandpa” physically and socially, a reversal of expected gender roles that maps onto the circumstances of the single’s production, namely in the fact that Audrey — instead of Hank — Williams featured on the track. The power of Hadacol, then, is depicted as not only physically restorative, but so powerful as to overturn gendered and age-related social structures. With this view of “grandma” not as the empowered agent of the song narrative, but rather the humorous consequent of gender and age norms gone awry, the intersecting narratives of the song most strongly mark the social and physical ideal as young, male, and sexually potent.

Although the scale of Hadacol’s traveling shows and cross-country advertising campaigns significantly outsized those of the early American medicine show, the mechanics and form remained largely unchanged from the single-wagon model. In both cases, music serves primarily as a means of audience/consumer engagement, delivering messages to varying degrees of subtlety regarding the curative powers of patent medicine. Stylistic features and text content both contribute to the construction of ideal bodies in these repertories, ideal bodies which take a remarkably similar form across the decades separating Hadacol from its predecessors. Maintaining essentially the same position on the physical ideal, Hadacol advertising simply replaces barbershop tunes with contemporary gendered narratives, and appeals to Native American “traditional” medicine with appeals to Southern, rural healing practices through the hillbilly genre.

Despite its radio, print, and live entertainment advertising success, Hadacol nevertheless came under the scrutiny of various regulatory agencies, including the American Medical Association. Following LeBlanc's attempts to "[invite] doctors to try Hadacol on their patients on a fee-per-patient basis,"[63] the *Journal of the American Medical Association* issued the following rebuke:

> It is to be hoped that no doctors of medicine will be uncritical enough to join in the promotion of Hadacol as an ethical preparation. It is difficult to imagine how one could do himself or his profession greater harm, from the standpoint of the abuse of the trust of a patient suffering from any condition.[64]

Later inquiry into Hadacol's advertising slogans by the FDA led LeBlanc to abandon more specific claims for the comically non-committal, "Hadacol was good for what ailed you, if what ailed you was what Hadacol was good for."[65] Criticism from the medical community (which enjoyed considerably more public trust and esteem than it had in the nineteenth century[66]) combined with LeBlanc's liberal spending habits eventually led to the decline and disappearance of Hadacol from the market.[67] Despite its relatively brief existence, however, Hadacol's advertising campaigns provide an intriguing continuation of the ideal health narrative grounded in nineteenth-century American medicine show culture.

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[63] Anderson, 150.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid., 151
[66] Ibid., 28.
[67] Ibid., 155.

· IV ·

Jamaica Ginger: Consumers of Patent Medicine Sing Back

On March 8, 1930, the Washington Post reported startling news from Oklahoma under the headline, "STRANGE PARALYSIS STRIKES 40 VICTIMS: Oklahoma City Authorities Believe Poison Rum Causes Malady, JAMAICA GINGER TESTED."[68] Since the late nineteenth century, various manufacturers had marketed the patent medicine Jamaica Ginger, commonly known as jake, as a health tonic. Resembling the advertising claims made by Hamlin's Wizard Oil and Merchant's Gargling Oil, advertisements for Jamaica Ginger boasted cures for a wide range of maladies, ranging from stomach pain to colds to irregular menses. During the Prohibition era, enterprising shopkeepers and bootleggers, however, took advantage of the high alcohol content of the tonic — over 90% in many cases — and marketed the substance as an alternative to more conventional, and at that time illegal, forms of alcohol. In the South, working class men, who lacked the means to obtain alcohol from Canada, and who did not have access to stills for home production, seem to have been especially drawn to jake.[69] In early 1930, however, Jamaica Ginger came to the center of a Federal investigation, one that discovered a toxic substance in a widely distributed brand of jake. By the time the Post reported on the findings of the investigation on July 9, the count of afflicted individuals

[68] "STRANGE PARALYSIS STRIKES 40 VICTIMS: Oklahoma City Authorities Believe Poison Rum Causes Malady. JAMAICA GINGER TESTED," *The Washington Post* (Washington), March 2, 1930, accessed May 8, 2014, http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/docview/150100647.
[69] Cecil Munsey, "Paralysis in a Bottle (The 'Jake Walk' Story)," *Bottles and Extras*, Winter 2006, 8, accessed May 8, 2014, http://www.johnsonsdepot.com/chicago/jake_cmunsey.pdf.

had risen to "approximately 600."[70] Suffering from paralysis of the limbs — especially the legs, leading to the shorthand nomenclature "jake leg" — these individuals had unknowingly consumed the neurotoxin triorthocresyl phosphate (TOCP), an additive to jake intended to raise the percentage of dissolved solids in the tonic to government-approved levels, without making it "noxious as a beverage,"[71] and thereby conforming to government standards for producing alcoholic-based products. At the culmination of the epidemic, tens of thousands of people had been afflicted with jake poisoning – in 1933, the United Victims of Ginger Poisonings Association claimed to represent 30,000 members.[72] While the condition was fairly widespread, especially in the South, the most developed record of the epidemic and its consequences occurs in a series of blues and hillbilly recordings released in the years around 1930. In these recordings, the musicians engage with the embodiment of jake leg, its social consequences, and its impact on other areas of identity, especially masculinity.

Though most of the jake leg repertory consists of sung pieces, usually one vocalist plus instrumental accompaniment, there are several instrumental pieces with programmatic titles referring to jake leg. In these pieces especially, blues and hillbilly musicians cultivate a sense of musical instability as representative of the physical

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[70] "Ginger Paralysis Cause Discovered by Chemists," *The Washington Post*, July 9, 1930, http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/docview/150093253.

[71] "Molecule of the Day: Tri-ortho-cresyl phosphate (Jake leg blues)," ScienceBlogs, last modified May 8, 2007, accessed May 8, 2014, http://scienceblogs.com/moleculeoftheday/2007/05/08/triorthocresyl-phosphate-jake/.

[72] "'Jake' Victims Organize Group: Paralysis Victims Determined to Prosecute Liquor Poisoners," *Pittsburgh Press*, July 13, 1931, [Page #], accessed May 8, 2014, http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1144&dat=19310713&id=FmIbAAAAIBAJ&sjid=TEsEAAAAIBAJ&pg=6451,2511486

embodiment of jake leg, or jake walk. This instability most prominently takes the form of marked syncopations. In both the Ray Brothers' "Jake Leg Wobble," and Narmour and Smith's "Jake Leg Rag," the main theme enters with an accented, tied note from the fourth beat of the measure through the first full beat of the next measure. This rhythmic lilting and heightened sense of temporal delay recalls the physical movements of someone with jake leg, who might walk by lifting the leg high in the air before placing the foot down after a slight delay.

More so than the unique musical features of these instrumental pieces, though, their generic titles hint at an association between musical style and disability. The Ray Brothers title their piece a "wobble," very overtly connecting their piece to physical instability. The fact that "wobble" rarely appears as a generic title in early blues and hillbilly music lends this instance of the term even more interpretive weight. Among the more conventional types of popular dances in the late 1920s and early 1930s, the "Jake Leg Wobble" stands out as a marked instance of musical irregularity, and by extension, of a physically disabled body that would move through space in a non-normate[73] fashion. Narmour and Smith's "Jake Leg Rag," too, engages with the embodiment of disability by participating in a genre defined by rhythmic deviation from a Western art music norm.

[73] The use of "normate" in this context comes from the foundational work of disability studies scholar Elizabeth Garland Thomson, who defines "normate" as a socially constructed position of power arising from a collection of socially and culturally determined characteristics for the unmarked body. As she theorizes in her 2007 work, *Extraordinary Bodies*, "those bodies deemed inferior become spectacles of otherness while the unmarked are sheltered in the neutral space of normalcy…This neologism [normate] names the veiled subject position of cultural self, the figure outlined by the array of deviant others whose marked bodies shore up the normate's boundaries." [Rosemarie Garland Thomson, "Disability, Identity, and Representation: An Introduction," in *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 8, PDF.]

For Narmour and Smith, the rag serves as an already-disabled aesthetic framework within which they might represent the unique experience of jake leg as disability.

A consideration of the demographics of the jake poisonings is necessary before delving further into the repertory, especially into the sung pieces that more directly represent disabled individuals. In late March of 1930, the Science News-Letter, Under the purview of the National Academy of Sciences, the National Research Council, and the American Association for the Advancement of Science, reported that among a sample of 119 cases of jake poisoning in Tennessee ("all but nine [of the subjects] admitted the use of alcohol, either Jamaica ginger or some other form"), "over four-fifths of the cases were in men or boys."[74] Though this report, among many others, points towards an overwhelmingly male demographic of poisoning victims, we cannot necessarily take the study — which required that poisoning victims have access to a medical research institute, and be willing to disclose their condition in a very public way — as an accurate representation of how jake leg proportionately affected women and men in poor Southern society. Further archival research focusing on personal correspondence, diaries, and similar ephemera from Depression-era Southern households might offer a more accurate sense of how Jamaica ginger affected various populations. In the public sphere, however, the sphere of medical studies and commercially marketed blues records, jake leg was a particularly masculine concern. All of the known recordings addressing jake leg, for example, come from male hillbilly groups and bluesmen. Further, the afflicted subjects in these songs tend to be male. The Ray Brothers, a hillbilly group signed with Victor

[74] "Paralysis Caused by Unknown Poison," *The Science News-Letter* 17, no. 468 (March 29, 1930): 194, accessed May 8, 2014, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3905876.

Records in the 1930s, does make reference to a woman — Dinah — who suffered from jake leg in their song "Got the Jake Leg Too," though none of the other known songs make reference to any other women afflicted with jake leg.

In addition to its neurological consequences, TOCP had the effect of making many men impotent. Blues musicians referred to this condition as "limber leg" or "limber trouble," and the term appears across several of the available jake leg recordings. Here, disability becomes inextricably tied with expectations for masculine virility and physical prowess. Some blues artists, such as Tommy Johnson in "Alcohol and Jake Blues" position themselves as the victims of jake-induced impotence. Johnson states outright, "I drank so much jake that it done give me the limber leg."[75] In contrast, Ishman Bracey, in his 1929 Delta Blues piece, "Jake Walk Blues," approaches impotence through the experience of an unnamed, distant subject:

> Aunt Jane, she come runnin', tellin' everybody in the neighborhood.
> Aunt Jane, she come runnin' and screamin', tellin' everybody in the neighborhood,
> "That man of mine got the limber trouble, and his lovin' can't do me any good."[76]

In the blues narrative, Bracey's impotent subject is doubly emasculated — first through the physical changes to his body caused by the adulterated jake, and second through the public humiliation that results from his female partner announcing his impotence publicly.

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[75] "'Alcohol and Jake Blues' Tommy Johnson, Delta Blues Legend," video file, 3:20, YouTube, posted by RagtimeDorianHenry, March 14, 2009, accessed March 16, 2014, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ayltwUwpW04.

[76] "'Jake Liquor Blues' ISHMAN BRACEY (1929) Delta Blues Guitar Legend," video file, 3:26, posted by Blind Blake, April 28, 2009, accessed May 8, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VySed3bBn2o.

The chorus of the Mississippi Sheiks' 1930 "Jake Leg Blues" makes similar reference to impotence, notably the impotence of an unnamed man — not of the singers themselves:

> Oh well, it's here he comes,
> I mean to tell you here he comes,
> He's got those jake limber leg blues.

In the final verse, the Mississippi Sheiks draw an even stronger cause and effect relationship between jake and impotence, and further hint that the condition was fairly widespread among the male population at the time:

> He could be named Charlie, and he could be named Ned
> But if he drank this jake, it will give him the limber leg.[77]

In contrast to Bracey's jake-sufferer, the Mississippi Sheiks' impotent subject is much less the subject of mockery than he is of sympathy and even pity. The introductory stanza addresses government and prohibition officials — "you who made the country dry" — in second person, blaming them for the unforeseen effects of Prohibition, namely many men's turn to jake and other sources of questionably safe alcohol. On the level of surface listening, the line "If you sell him jake, you'd better give him a crutch, too," lightheartedly warns against the dangers of jake. Most likely, this is how the Mississippi Sheiks intended the line to function in the song's narrative. In the broader socio-political context of the song, though, we might say that the line not only blames the unscrupulous bootleggers who benefitted from the jake market, but also subtly implicates the wider

[77] "Mississippi Sheiks - Jake Leg Blues," video file, 3:08, posted by AlvisaMinidoruv, January 9, 2013, accessed May 8, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2COwe6-yLvg.

system of Prohibition, and holds society responsible for accommodating jake leg as a disability.

Perhaps more so than any of the other recordings, the Allen Brothers' "Jake Leg Blues" and Asa Martin's "Jake Walk Papa" — two versions of essentially the same song — construct a narrative of male affliction and engage with the gendered history of the temperance movement and Prohibition. The songs alternate first-person narration between a man, who self-identifies as a "Jake Walk Papa," and his female companion. Jake Walk Papa laments his condition and comes to his companion for support and relief. Asa Martin's version of the song opens with the following stanza:

> I can't eat, I can't talk,
> I been a'drinkin' this jake until now I can't walk
> Come here mama, hold me by the hand,
> I'm a jake walk papa from a jake walk clan.

In the next stanza, however, the unnamed woman turns him away:

> Listen here, Daddy, I told you before,
> You keep drinkin' that jake, don't you knock on my door.
> I love you daddy, but don't you see,
> You can't drink jake and get along with me.[78]

The song continues alternating stanzas of narration from the man and woman, the latter reiterating her objections to her companion's jake habit and threatening to leave with each stanza.

The dynamic created between the two characters in this song largely mirrors the wider gender politics of Prohibition in the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century

[78] "Asa Martin - Jake Walk Papa - The Jake Walk Blues 1933," video file, 3:13, YouTube, posted by Warholsoup100, April 24, 2011, accessed March 16, 2014, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZgfvzDEKTso.

United States. As Lisa Andersen notes in her article, "Give the Ladies a Chance:" Gender and Partisanship in the Prohibition Party, 1869-1912," women served as a critical demographic in promoting the interests of the Prohibition Party and of Temperance in general. The particular social concerns of the party were inextricably tied to gender, as women "insisted that temperance, as a matter of family economy and personal morality, was an issue in which women were distinctly invested as wives and mothers."[79] The sale of liquor in public bars became an extension of women's domestic purview, and this extension played out in very real, legally implicating ways. Andersen cites the "prominent Prohibitionists" who believed that "wives who depended upon their husbands for financial support…should press claims against the liquor sellers who made husbands into inebriates."[80] Even further, women took an active role within the party itself. More so than in any other political, partisan context, women "perceived themselves as skilled leaders capable of managing complex bureaucracies and making substantial contributions."[81] Though the Prohibition Party and the Women's Christian Temperance Union originated in the Northern and Midwestern United States, the movements came to the South by the 1880s, notably with the establishment of the Prohibition Party in southern states.[82] By the time Asa Martin, the Ray Brothers, and the other jake leg artists had produced their recordings, the Nineteenth Amendment (granting women's suffrage)

[79] Lisa Andersen, "'Give the Ladies a Chance': Gender and Partisanship in the Prohibition Part, 1869-1912," *Journal of Women's History* 23, no. 2 (Summer 2011): 138, accessed May 8, 2014, Project MUSE (doi: 10.1353/jowh.2011.0025).
[80] Ibid., 143
[81] Ibid., 138.
[82] Ibid.

had been in effect for ten years, and women were gaining a stronger hold in American political life.

Within this gendered context, "Jake Walk Papa" and its narrative takes on additional significance from its surface presentation of a lighthearted, comic interaction between man and woman. While the physical effects of jake poisoning certainly trouble the Jake Walk Papa, the main source of conflict comes from his companion's self-assertion. The "Red Hot Mama," as she refers to herself in the song, poses a threat to Jake Walk Papa's autonomy and volition. Here, we see an example of increased women's political presence trickling down to a lower class, domestic context. In the end, the male narrator resolves this problem by effectively dismissing the woman. In the Allen Brothers' version of the song, the woman's voice drops out halfway through, without any apparent resolution or concluding remarks, while the man continues to assert that he will never give up his jake:

> When I die, you can have my hand
> Gonna take a bottle of jake to the Promised Land.[83]

Reference to the Promised Land in this verse not only hyperbolizes the man's insistent drinking of jake and provides a convenient coupling rhyme for "hand." It also gently diminishes the immoral aspects of alcoholism, as even with his bottle of jake, the man will supposedly gain entrance into heaven. Whatever moral objections the woman might have to the man's behavior, the "Jake Walk Papa" remains, at the very least, morally neutral. Considering the prominent rhetoric of women as inherently moral — especially

[83] "Jake Walk Blues - Allen Brothers," video file, 2:35, YouTube, posted by Geofbrit59, January 18, 2011, accessed March 16, 2014, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P9UZct0EEH4.

in comparison to men — assertion of male morality despite supposedly immoral behavior takes on stronger social and gendered significance.

Asa Martin's "Jake Walk Papa" extends the gender narrative even further, imagining a scenario in which, threatened with abandonment, the woman gives up her efforts to reform her man, and returns to his arms, penitent and desperate.

> I'm leavin' you mama, so fare ye well
> I'll have my jake in spite of, you know
> I'm goin' now mama, but you will see,
> You'll never get another lovin' papa like me.//
> Come back daddy, I'll tell you true
> Your lovin' mama can't live without you
> You can drink your jake, have your way
> Do anything daddy, but don't go away.[84]

Through this scenario, Martin's male character regains autonomy and agency by suppressing that of his female companion. Additionally, outside of the narrative, Asa Martin's male voice that speaks for the woman character suppresses female agency. Underscored by the flippant last line of the song, "I'm a Jake Walk Papa tryin' to have a good time," the male protagonist overcomes the disabling aspects of his jake paralysis as well as the social disabling at the hands of his assertive female partner. In fact, by highlighting the man's physical disability, Martin and the Allen Brothers enhance the sense of power in the face of a potentially threatening female presence. Despite the man's physical disability, which by all common knowledge has most likely rendered him impotent, he maintains his hold over his female partner.

Besides reflecting the public reality of jake leg demographics, framing jake leg as a disability that affects predominantly men somewhat counter intuitively increases men's

[84] "Asa Martin - Jake," video file.

social capital in this particular historical-social context. Stories of overcoming hardship — or of physical impairment that never really presented a hardship in the first place — cast men as immune to the socially disabling aspects of jake walk, and allow the men in these narratives to take on a hardened exterior that would presumably defend them against other threats to their social power. Without creating narratives of female affliction, the songwriters deny women similar opportunities to demonstrate resilience, and the social power balance between men and women remains undisturbed (and is perhaps even heightened).

Musicians, at least the group represented in the extant recordings, seem much more willing to acknowledge jake leg's affecting individuals across different social strata than they do its potential effect on different genders. The Science News-Letter reports, "many of the paralytics are people of some prominence in their own communities."[85] In "Got the Jake Leg Too," in the stanza immediately following the mention of "Dinah," the Ray Brothers name "the preacher" as the next victim of jake leg (though the preacher escapes at least some moral culpability by claiming that he drank Jamaica ginger "for flu"). His "excuse," as the Ray Brothers call it, mirrors the social politics of jake leg in Southern society. Jake leg as disability took on an especially pernicious stigma, as it played into the trope of disability as external marker of moral weakness, and perpetuated associations between physical disability and people of lower social strata. Again, from the Science News-Letter, "There is a natural reluctance to admit the drinking, and

[85] "Paralysis Caused by Unknown," 194.

officials feel that probably some details are being withheld [from the investigation]."[86] In the Washington Post's original report on the Oklahoma poisonings, the reporter notes that two prominent members of society, "including a chiropodist and a minister…denied they had partaken of liquor."[87]

Whatever people's willingness to acknowledge jake leg in day-to-day situations, blues and hillbilly music seem to provide spaces in which jake-leg sufferers and sympathizers could be most vocal about this moment in history. In terms of regional, class, and gender demographics, these styles of music align with the (publicly active) majority of those afflicted with jake leg. Blues and hillbilly music supposedly spoke to an essence of working class, male, southern American experience, and thus served as an aesthetically cohesive vehicle for working through the medical and social realities affecting that population. From the consumer's end, individuals otherwise unable or ashamed to admit their affliction could nevertheless become part of the jake-leg community through the consumption of these recordings. Such recordings, too, may have appealed to Northern, normate imaginings of Southern, disabled experience. Much in the same way that Northern imaginings of black, Southern experience flooded the vaudeville circuit early in the century, allowing middle-class, white audiences to construct a particular understanding of slave culture, so too, might the jake leg recordings have served as a means for normate bodies to imagine and momentarily inhabit the experience of disability in somewhat of a freak show context. Sales records of these recordings, of

[86] Ibid.
[87] "STRANGE PARALYSIS STRIKES 40 VICTIMS."

which many are unfortunately quite rare, would illuminate which populations consumed this music, and to what social ends.

Though since the 1930s, the jake poisonings have largely disappeared from the Southern cultural map, some references to the jake leg still crop up in twenty-first century culture and media. A simple Internet search for "jake leg" brings up the contemporary Mississippi jug band, the Jake Leg Stompers, as one of the first search results. From promotional material, including band biographies and photos posted on reverbnation.com, the band has cultivated a general old-timey image to accompany their musical style, described as "Chicken-Fried Pre-war Hokum-billy Jug music."[88] Band members dress in 1930s attire for both live performances and promotional photos, one of which depicts the band in black and white, arranged in front of an antique car with a suitcase in the foreground that suggests a nomadic lifestyle.

[88] "Artist Bio," Jake Leg Stompers Music, Lyrics, Songs, and Videos, last modified 2014, accessed May 8, 2014, http://www.reverbnation.com/jakelegstompers.

Figure 8. Promotional photograph of the Jake Leg Stompers[89]

The other half of the Jake Leg Stomper's band image involves general lawlessness and immorality. Here, again, promotional photos speak most strongly to this aesthetic. In addition to the aforementioned group photo and photos of the band taken at live performances, the band includes photos of the individual members on their Reverbnation platform. Each photo presents a band member as if in a mug shot, with side-by-side front-oriented and profile views. Band members wear harried expressions as if drunk (or hung-over), and carry plaques that display their stylized, "Southern" names (each band member's plaque displays a middle name, a hillbilly sounding nickname, like "Ramshackle," or both).

[89] "All Photos," Jake Leg Stompers Music, Lyrics, Songs, and Videos, last modified 2014, accessed May 8, 2014, http://www.reverbnation.com/jakelegstompers.

Figure 9. Mug shot style photograph of "Ramshackle" Jack Dunshee[90]

In a composite of all six member's individual mug shots — five men and one woman — the woman particularly stands out among the group. While the men around her yell at the photographer, look disheveled with hats and glasses askew, she alone appears carefree, demure, elegant, and mentally coherent.

Figure 10. Composite mug shots of all six band members[91]

Whether or not the band is conscious of the gendered rhetoric that surrounded jake leg in the 1930s, their projected self-image involving jake leg still appeals to notions of male-

[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid.

centered disability and immorality. In this context, the Jake Leg Stompers invoke less the idea of claiming disability for a larger purpose of gaining social power (which was so historically situated in the case of the bluesman and hillbilly musicians of the Prohibition era) than they do the general stereotype of women as less likely than men to engage in morally compromising behavior.

Written material on the website additionally promotes the image of lawlessness. Their band biography is titled "The Jake Leg Stompers: A History of the Banned," and the closing lines of the biography read, "so long as they don't owe you money, the Jake Leg Stompers look forward to seeing you soon at a club, festival or street corner near you."[92] Before the official formation of the band, one of the members, Jersey Slim, was supposedly "contractually obligated to play Irish fiddle for pints of Guinness,"[93] and stories of other members hint at a similar history of moral grey areas, or at the very least, general irreverence. The most powerful line in the biography concerning the musical history of jake leg, though, comes in the description of their musical aesthetic. The band directly articulates the fact (or rather, perception) that their musical style — namely blues and hillbilly music — has occupied a place in history as the music of social deviance. They write, "the Stompers capture the rebellious spirit of pre-1941 American music from Memphis Jug bands to Appalachian Hillbilly to Fats Waller when folk music was still considered dangerous."[94] For the Jake Leg Stompers, then, "jake leg" has lost many of its

[92] "Artist Bio," Jake Leg Stompers Music, Lyrics, Songs, and Videos.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid.

particular associations of the poisoning epidemic, and is used instead as a general marker for the blues tradition and its associated immorality or degenerate behavior.

Removed from the jake poisoning epidemic by almost eighty-five years, the widespread and severe effects of jake on thousands of working class Southerners may be hard to grasp, especially when many of those afflicted chose to keep their disability and its source a secret. Fortunately, the handful of jake leg blues and hillbilly recordings allow us to enter this fascinating historical space in which music, medicine, gender, and disability intersect.

· V ·

Patent Medicine, Health Constructs, and Social Bodies

A critical examination of the music used in marketing campaigns for patent medicine — and the body of music created in response to its use — reveals the host of social and cultural constructions surrounding any notion of the ideal body. These promises of social desirability encoded in patent medicine songs serve as critical of a role in companies' advertising campaigns as do claims to more concrete, physical remedies (though the validity of claims that patent medicine cured such ailments as cancer remains seriously doubtful). While companies may promise seemingly neutral results like relief from arthritis or increased energy, these benefits come packaged within value-charged expectations for physical health. In short, bodies which operate in cultural and social contexts cannot be fully abstracted from those contexts to produce a completely neutral, purely physiological entity. This is not to deny the physical relief that individuals experience from medicinal treatment — even the perceived or physiologically grounded relief possible through patent medicine use — but rather to acknowledge and engage with the social expectations that may shape efforts toward physical health. In Garland Thompson's words,

> Although these expectations [for normate bodies] are partly founded on physiological facts about typical humans — such as having two legs with which to walk upright or having some capacity for sight or speech — their sociopolitical meanings and consequences are entirely culturally determined.[95]

[95] Rosemarie Garland Thomson, "Disability, Identity, and Representation: An Introduction," in *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 7, PDF.

Examining this "hypothetical set of guidelines for corporeal form and function arising from cultural expectations about how human beings should look and act"[96] as expressed in patent medicine culture reveal the ways in which socially acceptable bodies are subtly marketed and encoded through explicitly performative means (the Hamlin vocal quartet performs its masculinity through barbershop narratives and their associated social code; the Hadacol Caravan performs "traditional" medicine through associations with the rural South; bluesmen perform disability and gender conflict through their Jake Leg narratives). The striking similarities between the constructed ideal bodies of nineteenth- and twentieth-century American medicine cultures — namely the young, male body as unmarked, with any deviations from it marked as socially and culturally undesirable — echo the historical othering/disabling of countless communities (i.e. women, non-European, older, physically non-normate bodies). Interrogations into historical constructions such as those propagated through medicine shows helps to deconstruct assumptions underlying the constructed (and often tacitly perpetuated) unmarked body.

Beyond providing a lens for exploring contextually specific notions of the ideal body, the example of patent medicine culture puts forth a strong argument for mindfulness in current health care practices. The critical framework employed here for dissecting the messages encoded in early- and mid-twentieth-century nostrum marketing might likewise be applied to current patient-directed advertisements for healthcare products, such as television-aired medication advertisements. As a field in which the body serves as the primary focal point, medicine and healthcare offer a rich sphere for

[96] Ibid., 6.

identifying these body-associated social constructs. Consequently, medicine becomes a field in which practitioners must remain particularly mindful of the social and cultural bodies of their patients in addition to the physiological concerns associated with the empirical side of medical practice.

Appendix. Catalog of Songs Included in Hamlin's Wizard Oil and Merchant's Gargling Oil Songbooks; song authorship provided when indicated in original source

Hamlin's Wizard Oil Song Book (1899)

The Church Across the Way
by W.B. Gray
Honey Does You Love Yer Man?
words and music by Ford & Bratton
Bonnie Sweet Bessie, the Maid O' Dundee
She Always Dressed in Black
words by Walter Ford, music by John W. Bratton
"Ridin' On De Golden Bike"
written and composed by Dave Reed, Jr.
My Little Polly's a "Peach"
He Once Was a Millionaire
written and composed by Chas. Graham
De Darkey Cavaliers
by Dave Reed, Jr.
They Wanted Me to Take His Place; or, "How Pleasant That Would Be"
words and music by William B. Glenroy
The Ship I Love
composed by Felix McGlennon
Cackle, Cackle, Cackle
They Ought to Take Something for That
written and composed by Joe Newman
Mike M'Carthy's Wake
words and music by Safford Waters
Is Life Worth the Living?
by Chas. K. Harris
Johnny, My Old Friend John
written and composed by William Courtright
Since Kate Learnt How to Play
written and composed by Ben. H. Janssen
Isabelle! (A Girl Who Is One of the Boys)
words by Walter H. Ford, music by John W. Bratton
Mrs. Clancy's Daughter
words and music by Edgar Selden
"Oh! Mister Austin"
words and music by William B. Gray
I'll Not Forsake You, Tom
words by Walter H. Ford, music by John W. Bratton
She's the Daughter of Officer Porter
music by Geo. Schleiffarth

Song Book Published by Hamlins [sic] *Wizard Oil Company* (ca. 1902)

The Honeysuckle and the Bee
words by Alb. H. Fitz, music by Wm. H. Penn
"There's Nobody Just Lie You"
words by Ed. Gardenier, music by William H. Penn
If You Can't Be a Bell-Cow, Fall in Behind
words and music by A.L. Robb and J. Fred Hill
It's Just Because I Love You So
arranged by Leo Friedman, written and composed by Jessie Bartlett Davis
Tell Me Will My Dream Come True?
words by Arthur J. Lamb, music by Geo. H. Bramhall
Moon, Moon
words and music by Nat. D. Mann
Gunnin' Carolina Coon
words by Matthew Woodward, music by Warner Crosby
Saddle Say You Won't Say "Nay"
words and music by Will R. Anderson
"Baby Mine"
words by Raymond A. Browne, music by Lew Friedman
I Left Ma Heart In Dixie
words by Harry B. Marshall, music by William Loraine
The Tale of the Sea Shell
words by Frank Pixley, music by Gustav Luders
I'm a Jonah Man
words and music by Alex. Rogers
A Splinter From My Father's Wooden Leg
words by Josh Wink and Harry Dillon, music by John Dillon

Humorous and Sentimental Songs as Sung Throughout the United States by Hamlin's Wizard Oil Concert Troupes in their Open Air Advertising Concerts (ca. 1910)

Only a Dream of the Old House
Swing Low, Sweet Chariot
When the Roses Come Again
Carve Dat 'Possum
Steal Away
Poor Old Joe
Gwine to Ride up in the Chariot
"I'se Gwine Back to Dixie"
I'm A Rolling
My Way's Cloudy
The Trundle Bed
The Gospel Train
Take This Letter to My Mother
Down Whar De Sunrise
Razors in De Air
Cradle's Empty, Baby's Gone
Think of Me
The Women of our Native Land
Get You Ready
The Anchor's Weighed

Humorous and Sentimental Songs as Sung Throughout the United States by Hamlin's Wizard Oil Concert Troupes in their Open Air Advertising Concerts (ca. 1910), [continued from previous page]

Plant Sweet Flowers on My Grave
Killarney
Rise, My Brother, Rise
I Must Go
Mighty Rocky Road
Old Wooden Rocker
Silver Bells are Ringing
Ting, Ting, Ting
"Drim in Druin"
Come Brothers Arouse
"Toddlin' Doon the Brae"
There's Nothing Like a Fresh'ning Breeze
When The Lord Called Daniel
Old Arm Chair
In the Morning by the Bright Light
Golden Slippers
A Lock of My Mother's Hair
Huckleberry Picnic
'Till the Clouds Go By
Keep in De Middle Ob De Road
The Water Mill
We'll Git Home By and By
Old, and Only in the Way
I Don't Like a Cur at My Heels
Light of My Soul
I Cannot Sing the Old Songs
A Flower From Mother's Grave
The Kicking Mule
Live Humble
Hear Dem Bells
Keep One Little Thought for Me
The Moneyless Man

Merchant's Gargling Oil Dream Fate Calendar and Songster (1890)

Dream Visions
We Were Comrades
Dar's a New Moon in de Sky!
Since My Mother's Dead and Gone
Some Other Girl Shall Wear the Ring
A Curl From the Baby's Head
Jericho
Whistling Coon
The Old Farm Bell
Pit-ti-pat Patter, the Little Feet Go
"Are You With Us, Casey?"
From the Cradle to the Grave
I'm Always Misunderstood
Haul the Wood-Pile Down
As We Wander in the Orange Grove
They Can't Keep the Workingman Down
Homeward I'm Coming to Thee
Barney, Come Home
Charlie's Courting
Signor Bing Binger, the Baritone Singer

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